

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 03484 090905Z

15

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

OMB-01 AID-20 RSR-01 /105 W

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R 090818Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4919

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUALA LUMPUR 3484

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT

SUBJECT: HUSSEIN ONN APPOINTED UMNO DEPUTY PRESIDENT

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 3421

1. IN MOVE TO KEEP UMNO ON CLEAR MIDDLE COURSE, PM RAZAK TAPPED EDUCATION MIN DATUK HUSSEIN ONN TO BE PARTY DEPUTY PRESIDENT, REPLACING TUN ISMAIL (REFTEL). UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL MET AUG 8 AND UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED HUSSEIN TO FILL ISMAIL'S UNEXPIRED TERM ENDING IN 1975. EARLIER IN DAY, UMNO YOUTH EXCO MET AND, DECLINING INDICATE PREFERENCE FOR ANY CANDIDATE, LEFT SELECTION OF DEP PRESIDENT ENTIRELY IN PM'S HANDS. ACCORDING INFORMED SOURCES, UMNO YOUTH CHIEF HARUN IDRIS MADE NO OVERT BID TO MANEUVER APPOINTMENT HIS WAY OR BLOCK CHOICE OF HUSSEIN.

2. RE CABINET APPOINTMENTS, PM RAZAK RESERVED ALL DECISIONS, NOTING THAT SELECTION OF MINISTERS WAS NOT BUSINESS OF UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL. IT EXPECTED, HOWEVER, THAT PM WILL MOVE IN

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PAGE 02 KUALA 03484 090905Z

NEXT FEW DAYS TO FILL ONE OR MORE VACANCIES CREATED BY ISMAIL'S

DEATH, PRINCIPALLY HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT CABINET WILL UNDERGO WIDE-RANGING SHAKEUP. IN THIS SITUATION, IT POSSIBLE THAT HUSSEIN WILL NOT ASSUME ALL POSTS HELD BY ISMAIL AND THAT NEW BLOOD, NOTABLY HARUN, MAY BE BROUGHT INTO CABINET.

3. COMMENT: HUSSEIN'S APPOINTMENT VIRTUALLY ASSURES HIM ACCESS TO HIGHEST POSITIONS IN PARTY AND GOVT. MANY FACTORS, PRINCIPALLY HIS REPUTATION FOR MODERATION, RELATIVELY GOOD STANDING AMONG CHINESE, AND LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS, WEIGHED IN HIS FAVOR. HUSSEIN ALSO INHERITS POWERFUL JOHORE UMNO ORGANIZATION AS WELL AS RESIDUAL GOODWILL AS SON OF UMNO FOUNDER JAAFAR ONN. ASSUMING HUSSEIN MOVES INTO ONE OR MORE TOP JOBS HELD BY ISMAIL, HIS APPOINTMENT IS GOOD OMEN FOR GOM STABILITY AND CONTINUATION OF MODERATE POLICIES BASED ON MULTI-RACIAL COOPERATION. FOR HUSSEIN BIOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT, SEE EMBASSY A-175, SEPT 8, 1972.

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